

CORPUS: Toward a Collaborative Online Research Platform for Users of Scholarly Editions

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Abstract

Scholarly editions are central to the humanities: they seek to reconstitute the texts of seminal writers and thinkers with rigorous exactitude in order to provide researchers with an authoritative standard text. In the digital age, scholarly editions need to rethink from the ground up their dissemination methods in the light of the kind of services they need to provide to their growing international constituency. Successful scholarly editions will be those that take full advantage of advanced contents management frameworks so as to *stimulate transformative scholarship while opening it to broader audiences*. They need to offer online a wide but conveniently centralized array of options to users, including powerful search tools, interactive tools, collaborative tools, work zones, discussion areas, and—especially important for academic users—feedback areas where their contributions get peer-reviewed, assessed, and professionally accredited.

We present the results of a research we have conducted toward the design of CORPUS, a dissemination platform that will (1) provide electronic access to the specialized content of critical editions; (2) provide access to a database of digital images while allowing authorized users to contribute metadata to that database; (3) provide an interactive interface allowing scholarly users to conduct research both publicly (in collaboration with others) and privately; (4) provide different levels of privileges allowing users to enhance the electronic product with their own scholarly contributions; (5) institute a quality-assessment system that keeps track of all contributors, gauges the quality of their contributions, protects the system's integrity to guarantee a safe and productive environment, and offers peer-reviewed certifications that scholars can use as evidence of professional worth for instance in P&T dossiers or grant applications.

We will report the results of a contextual study based on a series of IRB-approved interviews. We identified seven key user requirements, and generated corresponding design ideations for CORPUS.